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19. Numerical Features of Genesis 22

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19. Numerical Features of Genesis 22:1-19

The present logotechnical analysis of the famous passage dealing with the binding of Isaac is based on the text as it appears in its final organization in Codex L. In line with the restraint I exercised regarding emendations in my logotechnical investigation of the Psalms and many other texts, I maintain the present text as it lies before us. My analysis will show evidence to prove the reliability of the MT text.

The computer word count will register the number of words in the following categories: the verses, before and after the *'atnach*, the subsections of the text, the **introductory formulae**, the words attributed to **God and the Angel**, and the words spoken by **Abraham** and **Isaac**. The divine name numbers **17** and **26** and their multiples woven into the fabric of the text are shown in **bold face**. Moreover, the mathematical centre of the text will be precisely located.

1 וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹהִים נִסָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹוֹי אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִנִי : Inclusion with v. 11	8+5=13 4	1	1
2 וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־נָא אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יִצְחָק אֲשֶׁר־אַהֲבָתָּ אֶת־יִצְחָק וְלֶךְ־לְךָ אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַמִּרְיָה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה עַל אֶתֶר הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹוֹהִים :	16+9=25	24	
3 וַיֵּשְׁבִם אַבְרָהָם בְּבֹקֶר וַיַּחֲבֹשׁ אֶת־חֲמֹלּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־שְׁנֵי נַעֲרָיו אֹתוֹ וְאֶת יִצְחָק בְּנֹו וַיִּבְקַע עֶצֶי עֹלָה וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אָמַר־לּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים :	14+11=25 10+ 0 =10 48+25 =73		
4 בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַיֵּשָׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם מֵרֶחֶק :	48+25 =73		
5 וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל־נַעֲרָיו שְׂבוּ־לָכֶם פֹּה עִם־הַחֲמוֹר וְאַנִּי וְהַנֶּעֱר נִלְכָּה עַד־כֹּה וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְנִשְׁכַּח אֱלֹוֹכֵם :	4 14+3=17+		13
6 וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֶצֶי הָעֹלָה וַיֵּשֶׁם עַל־יִצְחָק בְּנֹו וַיִּקַּח בְּיָדוֹ אֶת־הָאֵשׁ וְאֶת־הַמֶּאֱכָלֶת וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו :	15+3=18+		
7 וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִנִי בְנִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה הָאֵשׁ וְהַעֲצִים וְאַיִה הִשָּׁה לְעֹלָה :	10+7=17= 8 52(2x26)	2 1 6 7	
8 וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהִים יְרָאֵה־לּוֹ הִשָּׁה לְעֹלָה בְנִי וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו :	2 Vs. 1-8 95+41=136 (8x17)		
9 וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר־לּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּבֶן שָׁם אַבְרָהָם אֶת־ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיַּעֲרֹךְ אֶת־הָעֵצִים וַיַּעֲקֹד אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנֹו וַיֵּשֶׁם אֹתוֹ עַל־ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִמַּעַל לְעֵצִים : is at the centre of the text. יִצְחָק	15+10= 25		
10 וַיִּשְׁלַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יָדוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הַמֶּאֱכָלֶת לְשַׁחֵט אֶת־בְּנֹו :	7 + 3 =10 8/26		
11 וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹוֹי מְלֶאֱךָ יְהוָה מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִנִי : Inclusion with v. 1	9 + 2 = 11 126+56=182 182 (7x26)	2 27	1 23

<p>12 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-תְּשַׁלַּח יָדְךָ אֶל-חֲנֹנִי וְאֶל-תַּעֲשֵׂה לִּי מְאוֹמָה כִּי עֲתָה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי-יִרְאֶה אֱלֹהִים אֶתָּה וְלֹא חֲשַׁבְתָּ אֶת-בְּנֹךָ אֶת-יְחִידְךָ מִמֶּנִּי:</p> <p>13 וַיֵּשֶׁא אַבְרָהָם אֶת-עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה-אֵיל אֲחֵר נֹאֲחַז בְּסֹבֶב בְּקִרְיָיו וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הָאֵיל וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ לְעֹלָה תַּחַת בָּנוֹ:</p> <p>14 וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם שֵׁם-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא יְהִנָּה וַיֵּרָא אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הַיּוֹם בְּהָר יְהִנָּה וַיֵּרָא:</p> <p>15 וַיִּקְרָא מִלֵּאד יְהִנָּה אֶל-אַבְרָהָם שְׁנֵית מִן-הַשָּׁמָיִם:</p> <p>16 וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נֹאם-יְהִנָּה כִּי יַעַן אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְלֹא חֲשַׁבְתָּ אֶת-בְּנֹךָ אֶת-יְחִידְךָ:</p> <p>17 כִּי-בָרַךְ אַבְרָהָם וְהִרְבָּה אַרְבָּה אֶת-זֶרְעוֹ כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכַחֹל אֲשֶׁר עַל-שֹׁפֶת הַיָּם וַיִּרְשׁ זֶרְעוֹ אֶת שְׂעֵר אֲבִיּוֹ:</p> <p>18 וְהַתְּבָרְכוּ בִּזְרָעוֹ כָּל גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ עֲקֵב אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעַת בְּקִלִּי:</p> <p>19 וַיָּשָׁב אַבְרָהָם אֶל-נַעֲרָיו וַיִּקְמוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ יַחְדָּו אֶל-בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיָּשָׁב אַבְרָהָם בְּבֹאֵר שֶׁבַע: פ</p> <p>Vv. 15-19 39a + 29b = 68 (4x17) For the significance of the 39 see Observation 6 below.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>10+14=24</p> <p>11+9=20</p> <p>7+6=13</p> <p>28+29=57</p> <p>5+3=8 8</p> <p>1/10</p> <p>5+13=18</p> <p>14+5= 19</p> <p>5+4 = 9</p> <p>10+4=14</p> <p>Grand total</p> <p>Vv. 1-19</p> <p>193+114=307</p>	<p>23</p> <p>17</p> <p>19</p> <p>9</p> <p>68=</p> <p>4x17</p>	
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Observations

1. The arithmetic middle of the 307 words is constituted by the name יֵצֶהֱק in v. 9b
 $307 = 153 + 1 + 153$. Since the number **153** is a multiple of the divine name number **17** (9×17), it symbolically expresses God's presence. This means that the author used this particular organization of the text to demonstrate Isaac's position in the fateful situation of his binding on the altar: he is surrounded by God's presence guaranteeing his safety. This vividly recalls the position of the psalmist 'in a valley of deepest darkness' (Psalm 23) where the words כִּי-אַתָּה עִמָּדִי, 'for you are with me', are positioned at the mathematic centre of the text flanked by **26** words on either side: $55 = 26 + 3 + 26$, the other divine name number. See my analysis of [Psalm 23](#).
2. The fact that vv. 1-8, dealing with the journey of Abraham and Isaac to 'the place', are made up of precisely **136** words (8×17) strongly suggests that we have to do with a consciously designed literary unit sealed by the name of God.
3. Within this passage vv. 5-7 stand out as being composed of **52** words (2×26), with **17** words in v. 5 as well as in v. 7. Moreover, the **17** words of v. 7 have **68** (4×17) letters, which is not a matter of chance since a similar case is to be found in v. 14 and such devices occur also in several other texts, especially in the book of Psalms.

4. In very much the same way as in vv. 1-8 the other significant total number of words in vv. 1-11, namely **182** (7×26), is a clear indication that this passage too has been composed as a distinct literary unit duly sealed by God's name. It deals with the events up to the dramatic intervention of the Angel. The passage is additionally demarcated by the word **הִנְנִי**, 'Here I am!', in both v. 1 and 11, which clearly functions as a device for inclusion.
5. The passage in which the Angel forbids Abraham to harm his son, because God was convinced that he has not withheld from him his only son, vv. 12-14, does not display significant numerical features except in v. 14, where Abraham names the place 'YHWH will provide'. The 13 words of v. 14 are made up of **51** (3×17) letters.
6. The final passage, vv. 15-19, dealing with the second intervention by the Angel, this time in order to convey God's blessing and his promise of numerous descendants for Abraham, are made up of **68** (4×17) words with **39** before the *'atnachs*. In my opinion, this is not a matter of coincidence either, for **39** represents the letter value of the verb **עָקַד**, 'to bind' ($16+19+4=39$), the key-word of the entire passage.
7. The presence of God in the two final speeches of the Angel in vv. 12-19 is numerically expressed by the fact that the Angel uses altogether exactly **68** (4×17) words.